

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 and 8-19 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 14 and 16 are amended, claim 7 is cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein, and new claims 18 and 19 are added. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

I. Objection to the Specification

The Office Action objects to the specification. The specification has been amended to obviate the objection. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the specification is respectfully requested.

II. The Claims Define Patentable Subject Matter

The Office Action rejects claims 1-17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Sowers (U.S. Patent No. 3,586,895) in view of Moran (U.S. Patent No. 6,522,817). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, neither Sowers nor Moran, individually or in combination, discloses or suggests the light guiding material is arranged so that a light transmittance preventing means is provided between the respective optical paths so that light is prevented from being transmitted between the respective optical paths, as recited in independent claim 1, and similarly recited in independent claims 4 and 16. Furthermore, none of the above applied references disclose or suggest a mask of a light blocking material and apertures are formed at tip end portion of the sharpened light guiding paths, as recited in independent claim 1, and similarly recited in independent claims 4 and 16.

As a preliminary matter, neither Sowers nor Moran pertains to a technique using near-field light. Further, as described in the application, the intervals between light guiding paths can become several μm , which is only several times larger than the wavelengths of light, and

thus close to wavelengths of light. In this case, a phenomenon in which photons jump over to adjoining light guiding paths may occur.

Sowers discloses that a light along a core can be transmitted to an adjacent core under conditions where the cladding material with an index of refraction substantially the same as that of the core material is used (see, for example, col. 3, lines 24-25, col. 5, lines 4-13 and Fig. 6). Nowhere does Sowers disclose or even suggest conditions where intervals between light guiding paths are small such that photons that can jump between guiding paths even if the index of refraction of cladding material is less than the index of refraction of the core material. Therefore, Sowers does not disclose or suggest providing the light transmittance preventing means between the respective optical paths.

Further, Sowers does not disclose or suggest a probe using near-field light for measuring, recording and reading. Thus, Sowers does not disclose or suggest a mask of a light blocking material and apertures are formed at tip end portion of the sharpened light guiding paths. As in the application, the apertures are smaller than the wavelength of light so that near-field is produced at the tip end portion of the sharpened light guiding path.

Moran does not compensate for the above-noted deficiencies of Sowers. Moran discloses a preselected alignment of an array of N optical fibers which is obtained using a relatively thick primary substrate with a thin layer mounted thereon (see Abstract of Moran). Moran does not pertain to multicore fiber that has a plurality of cores in a single clad. The fiber bundle of Moran is no more than disposing independent fibers. Therefore, with Moran, it is very difficult to make fiber bundle having the small intervals between light guiding paths.

Therefore, independent claims 1, 4 and 16 define patentable subject matter. Claims 2-3, 5-6, 8-15 and 17-19 depend from the respective independent claims, and therefore also define patentable subject matter as well as for other features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-6 and 8-19 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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